

Message Text

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 01 CARACA 07203 151352Z

44

ACTION CU-03

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01

PRS-01 L-03 AID-05 /027 W

----- 060124

R 142312Z JUL 75

FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9452

INFO USIA WASHDC

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE CARACAS 7203

STATE FOR CU/ARA & ARA/NC; USIA FOR ILA/DILLON & RODGERS

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: OEXC, VE

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT PEREZ PUBLICLY ENDORSES NEW CULTURE LAW

SUMMARY. PROPOSED NEW VENEZUELAN CULTURAL LAW ESTABLISHING A SUPER-BODY TO CONTROL AND DIRECT ALL CULTURAL ACTIVITIES IN VENEZUELA HAS AROUSED STRONG OPPOSITION FROM MEDIA AND BUSINESS ASSOCIATIONS ON GROUNDS THAT IT WILL ABRIDGE FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION. BILL HAS PASSED SENATE AND AWAITS APPROVAL BY HOUSE OF DEPUTIES WHERE AMENDMENT IS EXPECTED. END SUMMARY.

1. PRESIDENT PEREZ USED THE OCCASION OF THE PRESENTATION OF NATIONAL PRIZES FOR THE PLASTIC ARTS AND LITERATURE EVENING OF JULY 10 TO ISSUE A STRONG ENDORSEMENT OF THE CONTROVERSIAL "LAW OF CULTURE" WHICH WOULD ESTABLISH A NEW SUPERCULTURAL ORGANIZATION, THE CONSEJO NACIONAL DE CULTURA (CONAC). REPLYING TO CRITICS WHOM HE DESCRIBED AS HAVING A "WRONG AND DEFORMED CONCEPT OF THE ROLE OF THE DEMOCRATIC STATE AND OF THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW," HE SAID THAT THE LAW OF CULTURE "WILL NEITHER LIMIT NOR CONTROL FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, OR INTERFERE, REDUCE, OR MEDDLE WITH THIS LIBERTY OF THOUGHT."

2. SHORTLY AFTER TAKING OFFICE IN MARCH 1974, PRESIDENT PEREZ
LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 02 CARACA 07203 151352Z

CALLED FOR THE CREATION OF A COMMISSION TO DRAFT A LAW TO SET

UP A NEW CULTURAL BODY WHICH WOULD TAKE OVER AND EXPAND THE DUTIES AND FUNCTIONS OF THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF CULTURE AND FINE ARTS (INCIBA). ALMOST SINCE ITS INCEPTION IN 1966, INCIBA HAS BEEN A NOTABLE FAILURE, PLAGUED BY LARGE BUDGETARY DEFICITS, CONTINUOUS INTERNAL SQUABBLING, POOR ADMINISTRATION AND LACK OF RESULTS.

3. THE NEW CULTURAL LAW WAS DRAFTED BY A GROUP OF VENEZUELAN INTELLECTUALS, WHO, IN THE LATIN AMERICAN TRADITION, ARE LEFTISTS AND ANTI-CAPITALIST. (THEY WERE REPORTEDLY ENCOURAGED AND ASSISTED BY SEVERAL LATIN AMERICANS IN THE EMPLOY OF UNESCO. THE BILL WAS PRESENTED TO THE SENATE WHICH APPROVED IT MARCH 7, 1975, WITHOUT CHANGES OR DISCUSSION AND IS NOW AWAITING ACTION BY THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES.

4. THE MOST CONTROVERSIAL PART OF THE BILL AND THAT WHICH HAS STIMULATED THE GREATEST HOSTILITY AND REACTION FROM MEDIA OWNERS, IS ARTICLE 4. IT NOT ONLY GIVES CONAC BROAD POWER OVER ALL TRADITIONAL AREAS OF CULTURAL LIFE (ART, MUSIC, THEATER, DANCE, ETC.) BUT ALSO CONTROL OVER ALL "CULTURAL PRINT MEDIA, RADIO/TELEVISION MEDIA, AND MOTION PCITURE MEDIA."

5. ONCE THE BILL'S CONTENTS BECAME KNOWN, OWNERS OF MEDIA, ESPECIALLY RADIO STATIONS, LAUNCHED A VIGOROUS COUNTERATTACK USING COMMERCIAL SPOTS TO DENOUNCE THE BILL AS AN ABRIDGEMENT OF "FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION." OPPOSITION WAS VOICED BY THE FEDERATION OF CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE, TRADE ASSOCIATIONS OF RADIO AND TELEVISION OWNERS, THE OFFICIAL PRESS OWNERS ORGANIZATION AND COMMERCIAL CINEMA FILM DISTRIBUTORS. COPEI, THE PRINCIPAL OPPOSITION PARTY, IS ALSO PRIVATELY CONCERNED ABOUT THE BILL, AND REPORTEDLY IS MOBILIZING OPPOSITION TO IT IN THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES. SUPPORT FOR CONAC HAS COME FROM THE INTELLECTUAL "ESTABLISHMENT" (WITH SOME EXCEPTIONS), THE LEFTIST VENEZUELAN PRESS ASSOCIATION, THE MAS ORGAN PUNTO, AND CARACAS DAILY EL NACIONAL, ONE OF WHOSE OWNERS HELPED DRAFT THE LAW.

6. AS PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PRESSURE AGAINST THE LAW INCREASED, EMBASSY OFFICERS WERE INFORMED BY SEVERAL PERSONS, INCLUDING THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR INFORMATION, THE PRESIDENT OF THE LEADING DAILY, EL NACIONAL, AND A POMINENT RADIO EXECUTIVE, THAT THE BILL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 03 CARACA 07203 151352Z

WOULD BE MODIFIED TO THE SATISFACTION OF ALL CONCERNED.

7. IN EARLY JULY, PRESIDENT PEREZ PERSONALLY ASSURED RADIO EXECUTIVES THAT THE BILL WOULD NOT PASS AS WRITTEN, BUT HE WAS VAGUE AS TO SPECIFIC CHANGES TO BE MADE.

8. COMMENT: IN ADDITION TO THE GENERALIZED CRITICISM THAT THE BILL IS UNCONSTITUTIONAL AND COULD SHARPLY CURTAIL FREEDOM OF

EXPRESSION, MEDIA OWNERS DO NOT RELISH THE PROSPECT OF A
LEFTIST CONAC HAVING THE POWER TO INTERFERE WITH THEIR PROFITABLE
OPERATIONS. THE PRESIDENT'S FORCEFUL ENDORSEMENT INTRODUCES
NEW UNCERTAINTY INTO PROCEEDINGS.

9. AS NOW FORMULATED, THE PRESIDENT WOULD APPOINT CONAC BOARD
MEMBERS FOR A VIE-YEAR PERIOD PARALLELING THE PRESIDENTIAL
TERM. THIS WOULD GIVE THE EXECUTIVE BROAD POWERS OVER THE ENTIRE
SPECTRUM OF VENEZUELAN MEDIA WHICH UNTIL NOW HAVE OPERATED
WITH MINIMAL GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE.
SHLAUDEMAN

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 14 JUL 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CunninFX
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975CARACA07203
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750244-0380
From: CARACAS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750756/aaaabydj.tel
Line Count: 126
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION CU
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CunninFX
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 20 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <20 MAY 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <02 OCT 2003 by CunninFX>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PRESIDENT PEREZ PUBLICLY ENDORSES NEW CULTURE LAW SUMMARY. PROPOSED NEW VENEZUELAN CULTURAL LAW
ESTABLISHING
TAGS: OEXC, VE
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006